



WAT BENCHAMABOPITR





Wat Benchamabopitr Dusitvanaram



Published
on the occasion of
the Centennial Celebration of
Wat Benchamabopitr Dusitvanaram
1 March B.E. 2543 (A.D. 2000)



Preface

Wat Benchamabopitr or "The Marble Temple" as known to tourists was founded by King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, on 1 March 1900 and there celebrates the centennial anniversary on 1 March 2000. To this regard, the Temple, especially the Uposatha Hall, has been restored in order to celebrate the said occasion and also to perform a merit making in dedication to its founder king.

Besides, the year 1999 marked the great invent in Thailand as our beloved King Bhumibol Adulyadej was 72 years old on 5 December 1999. Government, the Order of Sangha and the people throughout the country have celebrated and prayed for his long life. The centennial celebration of our Temple is regarded as a part of the 72th Anniversary Birthday Celebration of H.M. the King.

Wat Benchamabopitr is one of the most beautiful temples in Thailand. It has been reckoned for its distinction of the Uposatha Hall and its pleasant layout for a hundred years. Many tourists all over the world come to visit this temple with a large number in each year. It is wise to publish the booklet as a guide to the Temple in separate volume of Thai and English versions. A brief account of its history focussing on the interesting spots is described.

It is expected that this booklet would be of use to the visitors and others interested. My thanks are due to all the persons concerned to have made this publication possible.

(Phra Brahmacariyacarya)

The Lord Abbot

Wat Benchamabopitr Dusitvanaram



Wat Benchamabopitr Dusitvanaram



Introduction

Wat Benchamabopitr Dusitvanaram (simply called Wat Benchamabopitr) or “The Marble Temple” as known to foreigners is most satisfactory architecturally with its symmetry and lovely proportions. The Uposatha Hall (Bot or Ordination Hall) was constructed from Carrara marble from Italy and showing distinct European neo-classical influence. It was designed by H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse, half brother to King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, and has been reckoned for its architectural and decorative arts of finest Thai craftsmanship, say, second to none in the world. It attracts



the interest of tourists throughout the world to come to visit with a large number each year.

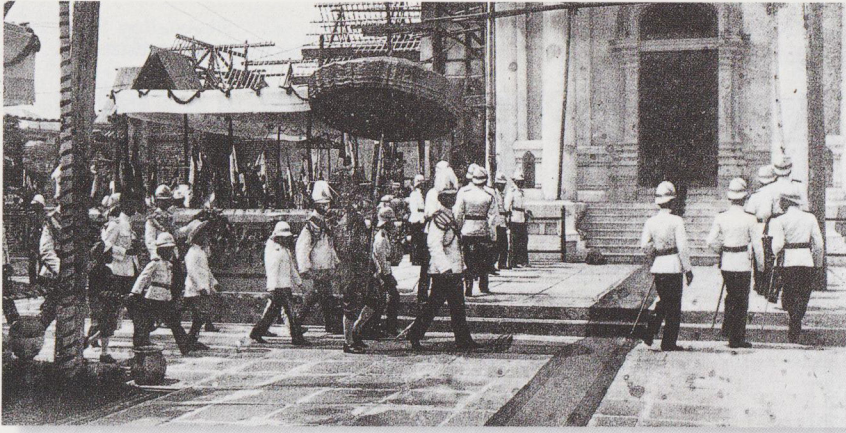
Wat Benchamabopitr is a royal monastery belonging to first class ranking of Rajavaravihara. It covers the area of about 12 acres, locating in Dusit District of central Bangkok with just a distance of five to ten minute-walking to H.M. the King's Chitralada Palace in the northeast, Dusit Palace and the Parliament House in the northwest, and the Government House in the south. The four main roads passing nearby the temple are the Rama V Road in the east, Sri Ayudhya Road in the north, Rajadamnuennok Avenue in the west, and Phitsanulok Road in the south.

Wat Benchamabopitr was founded by King Chulalongkorn, Rama V of the Chakri Dynasty, on 1 March 1900 (counted as Thai 1899). The layout was very well-planned and demarcated by Buddha quarter (Buddhavas like the Uposatha Hall, etc.), monk living quarter (Sanghavas like the monk cells, schools, etc.), and lay helper living quarter outside the southern fence.

LAYOUT PLAN



- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Uposatha Hall | 11. Si Somdej Pavilion | 22. Kuti Dilok Nobbarath |
| 2. Cloister | 12. Song Dharm Hall | 23. P. Kittivan Library |
| 3. Sala Mom Cheuy | 13. Bovornvong Bell Tower | 24. A.P.K. Memorial Museum |
| 4. Sala Yai-Rabiab | 14. Phra Vihara Somdej (S.P.) | 25. Pali School |
| 5. Bhodhi tree | 15. Kuti Somdej | 26. Centennial Memorial Hall of King Chulalongkorn |
| 6. Uruphong Pavilion | 16. Bannarasabhag Hall | 27. Ho No. 2 (Monk residence) |
| 7. Chao Khun Chom Marda Samlee Waterside Pavilion | 17. Benchabisabhag Hall | 28. Ho No. 3 (Monk residence) |
| 8. Thao Vorachandra Waterside Pavilion | 18. Benchamabopitr School | 29. Dharmajinaraja Panchabopitr |
| 9. Canal | 19. Rowed Kuti and Single Kuti | 30. Phaonisaichop Hall |
| 10. Song Phanuat Hall | 20. Kuti Sarbasastra | |
| | 21. Kuti Phraklang Khangthi | |



King Chulalongkorn on his performance of Kathina ceremony
(offering robes to monks) at Wat Benchamabopitr.

Historical Background

Wat Benchamabopitr was built on the site of an old temple which was at different times called Wat Laem or Wat Saithong of which the origin was not known. In the reign of King Rama III, its name was firstly mentioned in Thai history that in 1826 Prince Anuvong of Vientiane, Kingdom of Laos at that time, revolted againsts Thai Kingdom and moved his troops through northeastern Thailand until to Khorat plateau to attack Bangkok capital.

King Rama III had ordered to call up armies vigorously and sent three organized fighting forces to defeat Laotiane troops at the Khorat Plateau. At the same time, he appointed Prince Bibidh Bhogabhubendra, a son of King Rama II as chief commander to organize the army to defend Bangkok. The site of Wat Laem or Wat Saithoug was the headquarters of the chief commander of the central armies.

Within a few days, Anuvong's troops were defeated at the Khorat plateau before marching down to Bangkok. After the war, in gratitude to the temple, Prince Bibidh Bhogabhubendra together



Thai stamps portray on King Chulalongkorn, H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse, and the Marble Temple

with his full four brothers and sisters had restored this temple and erected five pagodas (chedi) in row in front of the temple in 1827.

In the reign of King Mongkut, Rama IV, the King was pleased to rename the temple “Wat Benchabopitr” meaning the temple of the five princes and princesses.

Foundation

In 1898, King Chulalongkorn had thought of the construction of a royal garden for his pleasure ground on weekends, thus he ordered to purchase the lands in the north of the Grand Palace between Samsen and Phadung Krugkasem canals which were the ricefields and fruitgardens of the private owners at reasonable prices and then started the improvement on 16 February 1899 continued until its completion in 1 March 1900, and the name given to this place by the King was “Dusit Garden”.

Within the precincts of Dusit Garden, formerly there located two old temples of the origin unknown, one was a deserted temple and the other one was Dusit or Dusitaram Temple which was

decayed and only one monk lived. Nearby the Dusit Garden was Wat Benchabopitr, as stated above. King Chulalongkorn decided to restore it completely in order to compensate for the destruction of two old temples during the making of the nearby Dusit Garden. The name was then changed into "Wat Benchamabopitr", meaning the temple of the Fifth King. (Please notice to their different names and meanings; Bencha = five, Benchama = the fifth, and bopitr (Pali - Pavitta) implies the king or prince).

At the first stage, the monks' cells had been constructed sufficiently to accommodate 33 monks and novices, the number equal to that of the years of King Chulalongkorn reigning. The layout was planned by H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse, the king's half brother, and all the construction was placed to Chao Phraya Voraphong Bibadhana. At the same time, the temporary Uposatha Hall, a small simple one made of wood, thatched with attaps, was built to serve necessary religious functions.

The King's objectives to have constructed this temple were:-

- 1) to declare his being a strict Buddhist and a strong patron of Buddhism, and at the same time to compensate for the destruction of two old temples by making a new one with distinction, worthy to be a royal temple nearby Suan Dusit Garden;
- 2) to exhibit the Siamese architectural design and decoration arts of the Uposatha Hall, its cloister as well as the other buildings and their surroundings to the eyes of the world;
- 3) to act as a gallery for the images of the Buddha in different styles and periods for the approach of the public;
- 4) to provide ecclesiastic education for monks and novices higher to the college level; and,
- 5) to be a memorial temple of his own name "Wat Benchamabopitr" or "Temple of the Fifth King" where, after passing away, his ashes be interred under the pediment of the Main Buddha, Phra Buddhajinaraja, in the Uposatha Hall.



Lawnyard of Wat Benchamabopitr

On 1 March 1900, the first day that King Chulalongkorn placed his dwelling upon Suan Dusit Garden Pavilion, he went to Wat Benchamabopitr and declared a royal decree to grant the Sangha (the Order) for establishing the boundaries of the jurisdiction of a community of monks. A recitation in the royal decree reads:-

"...the Temple be named Wat Benchamabopitr representing the sequence of the Reign of the Fifth King of the Chakri Dynasty...."

Thus came the foundation day of Wat Benchamabopitr as on 1 March 1900 and comes the centennium of its establishment on 1 March 2000.

In the reign of King Vajiravudh, Rama VI, he ordered to continue further construction of the temple. There shifted up and attached the serrate and roof ridges to the gables of the Uposatha Hall. At the same time, when the last lot of the marble ordered from Italy had arrived, the king had ordered to decorate them to the unfinished parts of the Uposatha Hall and its cloister until it finished. The artists of the Fine Arts Department were ordered by the king to paint the wall of the Uposatha Hall with oil colour. The figurative decoration is a deva (god) clasping hands in token of worship in yellow on the white wall.



H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse,
Archited of Wat Benchamabopitr



Signor Mario Tamagno,
and Italian architect who assisted
the prince in marble decoration

Key person in the concern of the
construction of Wat Benchamabopitr

The Uposatha Hall and its cloister, after its completion to the plan and design, become one of the most beautiful temple in Thailand and exhibits the splendid Thai architectural arts to the eyes of the world.

When the buildings in the monk living quarter had been completed, the king invited thirty three monks and novices from Wat Mahadhatu, marched in a great procession to reside at Wat Benchamabopitr on 6 December 1900 and bestowed upon the title after the name of "Wat Benchamabopitr" with "Dusitvanaram"

During this time, the king ordered H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse, the then Minister of Public Works, to design the Uposatha Hall and its cloister and then the construction had begun under the supervisorship of the king and the prince architect.



H.R.H. Prince Damrong
Rajanubhab



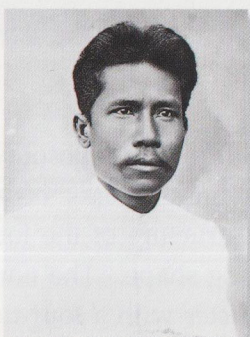
Phraya Rajasongkram



Prince Voravadhana
Subhakorn



Chao Phraya
Voraphong Bibaddhana



Phra Prasiddhi Patima



Phraya Cholayuddhayodhin
(Andre du Plessis de Richelieu)

Phraya Rajasongkhram (Korn Hongsakul), one of the well-known engineers at that time was assigned to construct the building. Unfortunately, as the construction had not completed to the plan, King Chulalongkorn passed away on 23 October 1910, left many things to be done behind him. However, King Vajiravudh, Rama VI, his son, had furthered all the construction until it finished. Even since, supplementation had been made to the temple by successive kings, princes, the noble and other people.

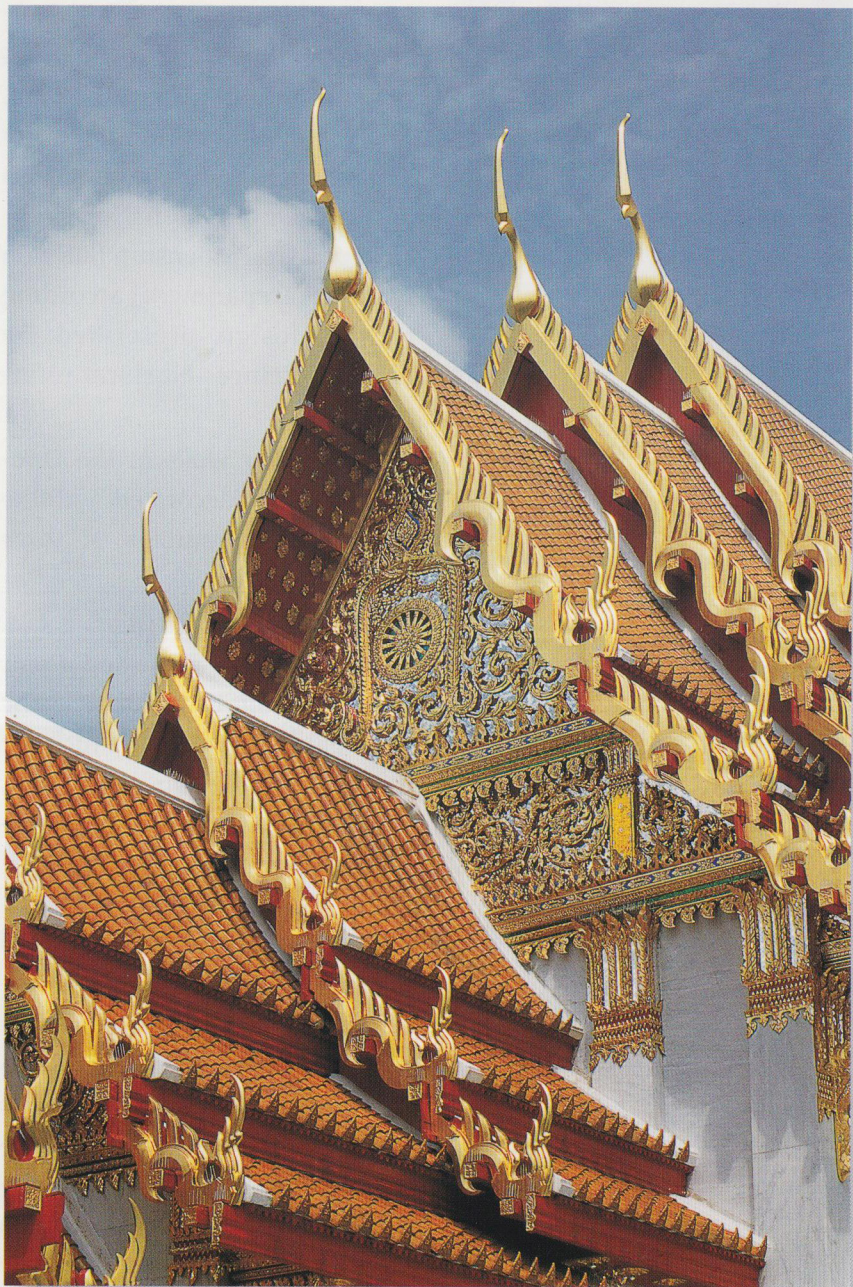


The Uposatha Hall

The Uposatha Hall (bot or Ubosoth in Thai) of Wat Benchamabopitr is one of the finest works of architectural arts of the Bangkok period. It is a structure of the four-gabled style. The east gable extends in an oblong shape. The north and the south gables were connected to its cloister with a four-tiered roof. The principal north and south gables are of five-tiered roof. Extended from both sides of the Uposatha Hall is its cloister, forming a square enclosure that takes in the rear part of the Uposatha Hall.

There are boundary walls (balustrades) in front of the Uposatha Hall. The marker stones (Sema or Bai Sema in Thai) are in the form of two posts with lotus bud tops placed at the two front corners of the boundary walls and two stone slabs inscribed with Dharmacakra or the Wheel of Law placed in the enclosed terrace at the back of the Uposatha Hall.

Within the boundary walls, there is a floor with light pink and grey granite slabs.





Front entrance of the Uposatha Hall

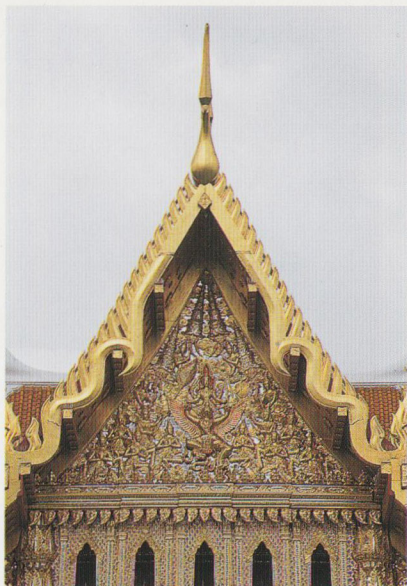


Phra Dharmacakra in the niches below the west gable of the Uposatha Hall

Supporting the east gable are four marble posts. Nearby a pair of marble lions guard the front entrance into the Uposatha Hall. Their model was moulded by Khun Sakol Pradith, a craftsman of the Department of Ten-Grouped Craftsmanship (later on Fine Arts Department) according to the design prescribed by H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvativongse.

The outer walls of the Uposatha Hall are decorated with the white square marbles of three centimetres in thick.

Under the west (rear) gable, there are marble posts and a pair of marble lions as the same as the front gable. Here in the niche at the back of the Uposatha Hall, there enshrined the standing Buddha image in the attributes of royalty, in the attitude of forbidding his relatives to fight with one another, in the style of the Lopburi period. On his right palm, there inscribed a Dharmacakra or the Wheel of Law, that bears the name "Phra Dharmacakra" as given by King Chulalongkorn. It is probably the largest and best preserved bronze image of the Lopburi period in existence. It was brought here



from Wat Devaraj Kunchorn, Bangkok. At the base there interred the ashes of H.R.H. Princess Sudaratana Rajaprayoon who was a nursemaid to King Chulalongkorn while he was so young.

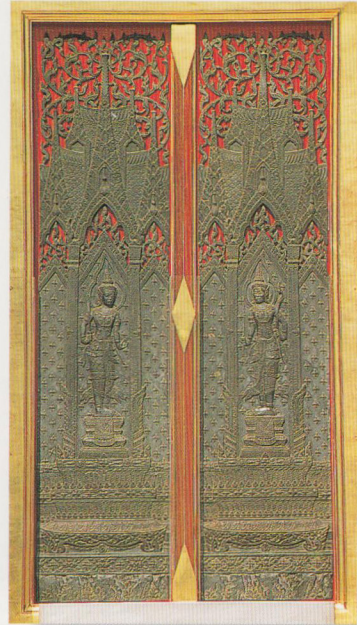
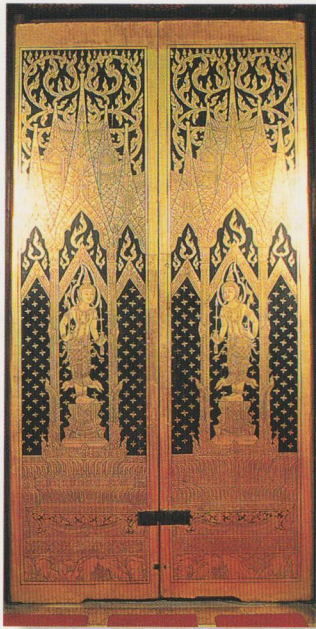
All the finials of the roof of the Uposatha Hall are lacquered and gilded.

The roof itself is covered with yellow glazed tiles, the so-called Kabu tiles which are of the over-arched shape. The tiles of the last rows of the roof ends are made up of the celestial debanom (a figure of a deva clasping hands in token of worship.)



The four gable-ends portray the four seals used in the reign of King Rama V, viz:-

1. The east (front) gable-end is woodcarving portraying the "Grudh Phah" seal, i.e. Vishnu on the garuda.
2. The west (rear) gable-end is wood carving portraying the "Maha Ongkarn" seal, i.e. the Maha Unalom on the throne.
3. The north gable-end is stucco motif portraying the "Iyaraphot" seal, i.e. the Eravan or the three-headed elephant.
4. The south gable-end is stucco motif portraying the "Chakraroeth" seal, i.e. the Wheel of Law.



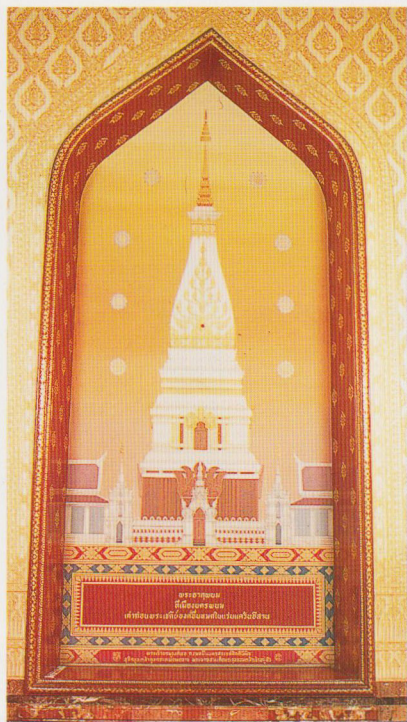
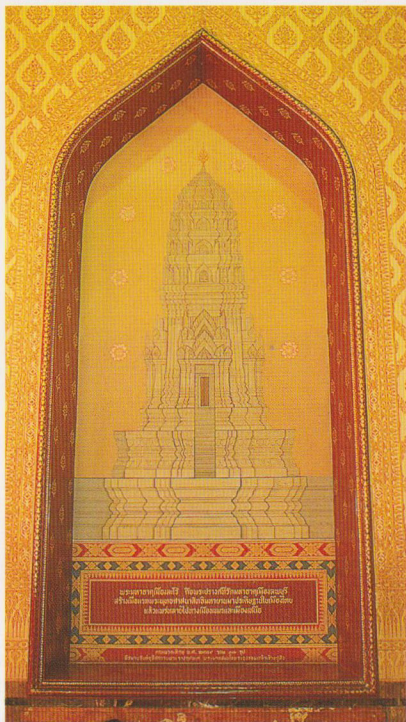
Inward door panel of the Uposatha Hall Outward door panel of the Uposatha Hall

In making these portraits, H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse had assigned to Prince Voravadhana Subhakorn to design them with his approval.

The door panels have an embossed copper showing a celestial holding either a sword or a bow on the outward side. The same picture is shown as painted in gold over a red background on the inward side. Windows panels also have an embossed copper showing the demon bearers on the outward side and the same picture in gold paint over a red background on the inward side.

Over the window frames are the celestial debanom (a figure of a deva clasping hands in token of worship) and Thai traditional motifs in stained glass. This work was the contribution of Prince Chulakrapongse who commissioned Florentine artists to produce it to designs sent from Bangkok in 1954.

On the Uposatha Hall, there enshrined Phra Buddhajinaraja as the main Buddha centered at the backward of the hall. The Buddha sits on the throne high equal to the lower frame of the



windows. In front of the Buddha, there is a balustrade made of Jade coloured marble.

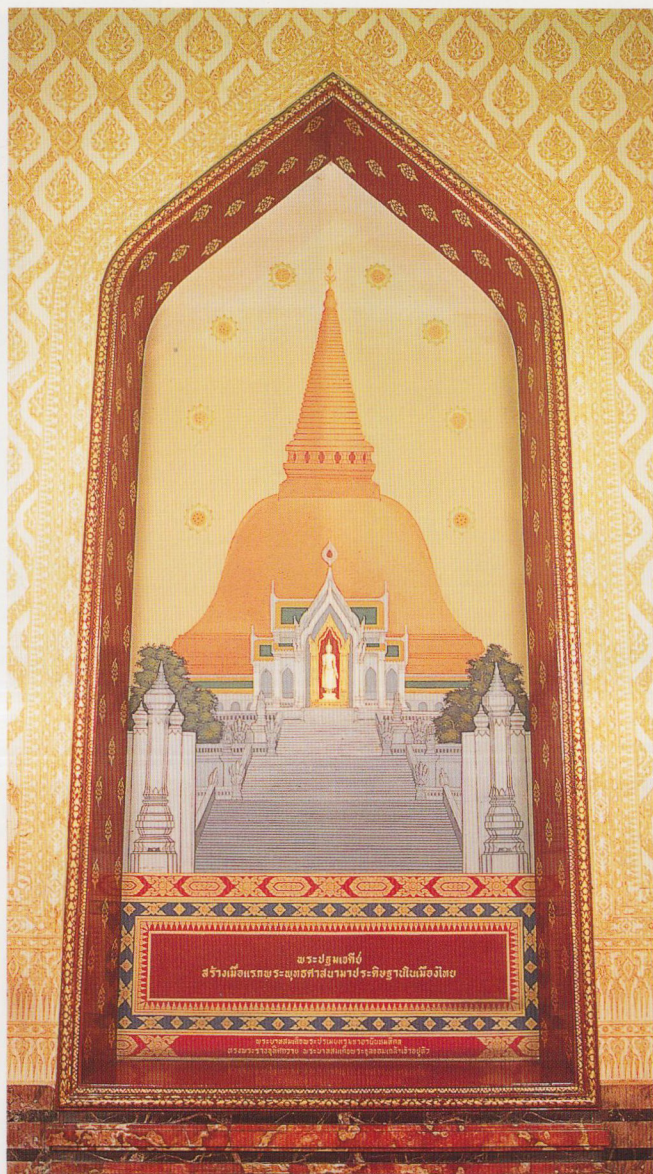
Beneath the Buddha's throne, there interred the ashes of King Chulalongkorn by King Vajiravudh, Rama VI, according to the will of his father king.

Truly speaking, the Uposatha Hall is not of great size. The designer prince explained that its size is proportional to the size of the main Buddha image enshrined. The ground of the hall is floored with different colour slabs of marble.

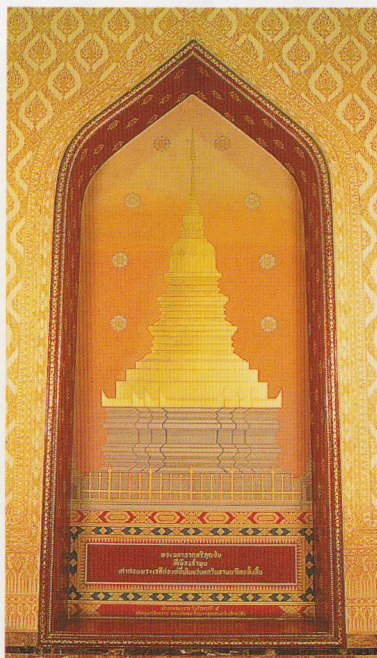
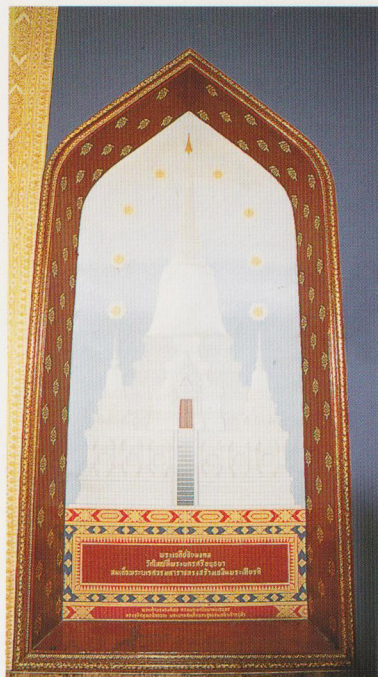
Inside of the hall, there are eight alcoves, each contains a painting of one of the great stupas in Thailand. The paintings were done in 1942 showing the following: Phra Pathom Chedi at Nakhon Pathom, Phra Maha Dhatu at Lavoh or Lopburi, Phra Dhatu Phanom at Nakhon Phanom, Phra Maha Dhatu Hariphunchai at Lamphoon, Phra Maha Dhatu at Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phra Maha Dhatu at Sukhothai, Phra Sri Ratana Dhatu at Sukhothai, and Phra Chedi Chaiyamongkol at Ayudhya.

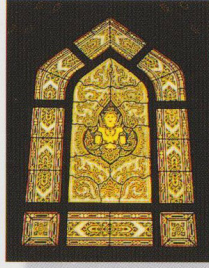


Painting of Phra Maha Dhatu at Nakhon Si Thammarat
King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX
had subscribed in dedication to King Chulalongkorn, Rama V



Painting of Phra Pathom Chedi at Nakhon Pathom
King Ananda Mahidol, Rama VIII
had subscribed in dedication to King Chulalongkorn, Rama V





(Above) Stained glass over the windows
(Below) Windows of the Uposatha Hall

Among subscribers for the paintings were King Ananda Mahidol, who financed the painting of Phra Pathom Chedi at Nakhon Pathom and his brother, H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who was responsible for the painting of Phra Maha Dhatu at Nakhon Si Thammarat. The others had been sponsored by other people.

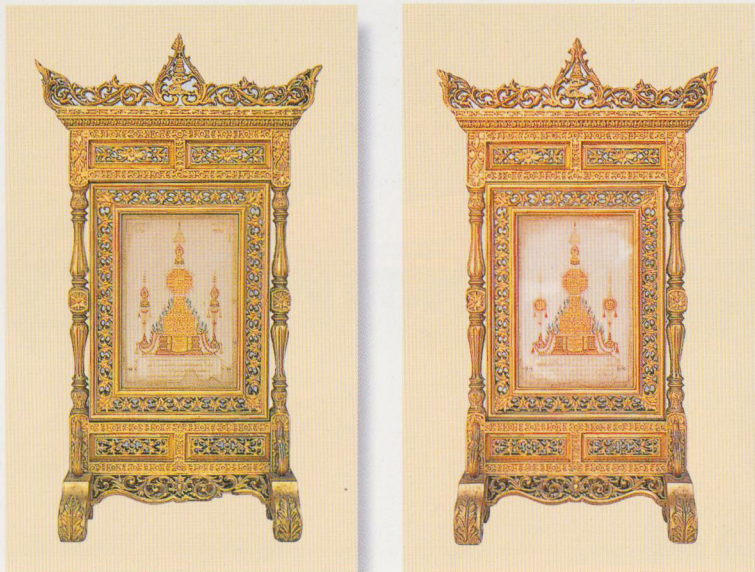
Regarding the marbles used to decorate the Uposatha Hall and its cloister, the designs, the colours and the sizes had been specified by H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse with the assistance of an Italian architect, Signor Mario Tamagno, who had been working with the Department of Public Works at that time. At the same time, Signor Carlo Allegri, an Italian engineer, had assisted in advice and correspondence with the marble companies in Italy. The tender was opened and the Novi Guiseppe Company in Genova was contracted. The marbles are of the finest quality from Carrara in Italy. Signor L. Mosso, an architect of the Novi Guiseppe Company, had come to help in decoration of marble on royal expenses.



Phra Buddhajinaraja

Phra Buddhajinaraja is the main Buddha of the Uposatha Hall. The image is a replica of Phra Buddhajinaraja at Wat Phra Sri Ratana Maha Dhatu, Phitsanulok province. The image is in bronze, seated with one leg above the other, in the attitude of subduing mara, the knee-span width is about 1.90 meter and the image required 2.5 tons of bronze. It is enshrined on the throne with a balustrade in front. The arched flame as appears today had been rebuilt by King Rama VII to have replaced the old one of which the workmanship was unsatisfactory.

In casting the image, King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, had ordered Phra Prasiddhi Patima gone to mould from the original model at Wat Phra Sri Ratana Maha Dhatu in Phitsanulok province. After his approval, the king had graciously presided over the casting ceremony on 20 October 1901 and the casting had been undertaken in separated pieces. The image was then transported by water to the



Wooden frames, lacquered and gilded, containing the horoscope of the Buddha and of Phra Buddhajinaraja, standing aside Phra Buddhajinaraja in the Uposatha Hall

founndry of the royal navy to be finished. After that the image had been shifted to the boat marching in procession to have it enshrined in the Uposatha Hall on 13 December 1901.

Having seen all the works from moulding, casting and finishing had been well done, the king was too pleased to put on a sash of diamonds worn by royalty to the Buddha image on 12 December 1901, a day before enshrining it in the Uposatha Hall.

Even after the enshrining, the king was also pleased to have taken off his sash of Decoration of the Highest Order of Nopharatana Rajavarabhorn to be presented to the Buddha image.

At the end of the year 1909, the king had ordered to employ Mr. Tsuruhara, a teacher of the School of Craftsmanship, Tokyo, to come to paint the image in gold. After finishing, the king ordered to have organized the Celebration of Phra Buddhajinaraja on 5 August 1910. That ended the period of King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, as he passed away on 23 October 1910.

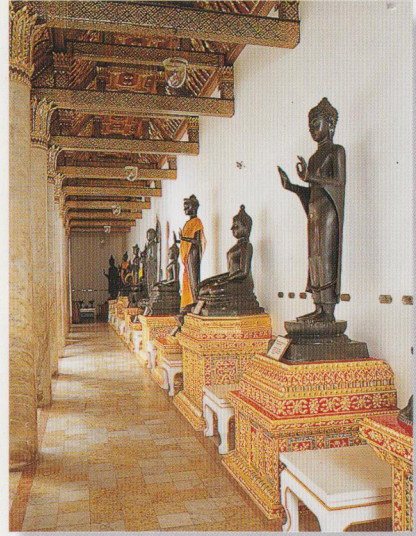
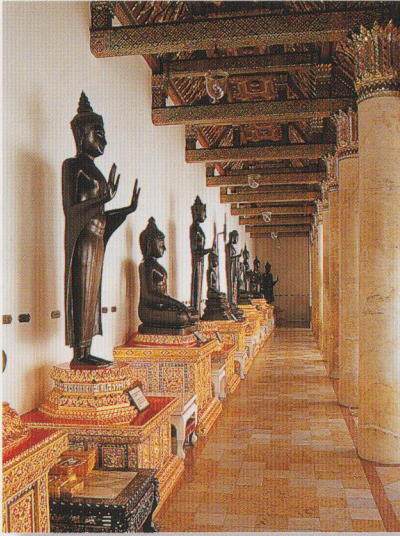


Phra Rabiang or Phra Vihara Khod or the cloister of the Uposatha Hall

The Cloister

The cloister or the generally so-called gallery extends from both sides of the Uposatha Hall to form a square enclosure that takes in the rear part of the Uposatha Hall with open larger ground at the middle. The whole design was made by H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse in conformity to the symmetry and the proportions of the layout of the Uposatha Hall. There are eight doorways to the cloister, two each under their north and south gables, and one in the west facing to the west gable of the Uposatha Hall. The outward sides of the door panels have the "Siew Kang" (Chinese guardians) in embossed copper. The inward sides have the same picture but done in coloured painting.

The ground in the rear part of the Uposatha Hall was floored with light pink and grey granite slabs, while the ground of the cloister floored with light yellow and white marble slabs.



A row of Buddha images enshrined at the cloister of the Uposatha Hall

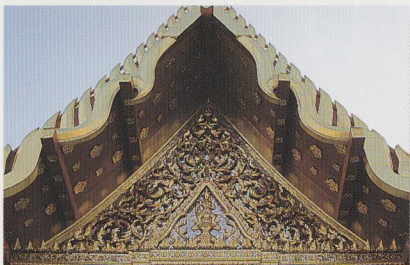
There are posts supporting the roof of the cloister totaling to 92 in number. Of these, sixty-four posts are round and made of the whole marble. The rest of twenty-eight posts are quadrilateral, made of brickwork and decorated with marble slaps. All of them have lotus bud tops.

The walls are brickworked surfaced the inward sides with cement painted in white colour, while the outward sides decorated with white marble slabs. There are tricky windows fronted with balustrades, totaling to fourty-eight in number.

All the finials of its roof are lacquered and gilded.

Below the gables of the north and the south corners, there enshrined four stone Buddha images in the niches.

There are ten gable-ends of the cloister, showing the design of the seals of the ten ministries in the reign of King Rama V as follow:-

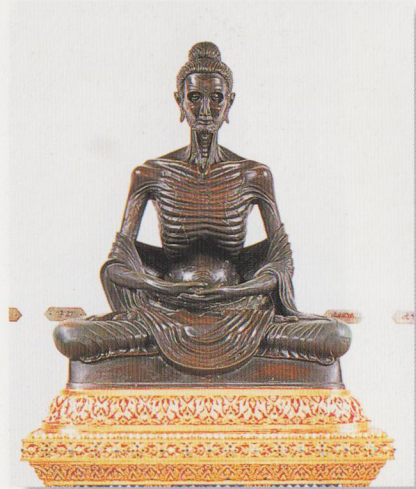


Gable-ends of Phra Rabiang or Choister of the Uposatha Hall

1. Seal of Rajasiha, for the Ministry of Interior;
2. Seal of Phra Yom on Siha, for the Ministry of Municipal Security;
3. Seal of Phra Suriyamonthon (large) (with a peacock unfolding its tail-end on the end of the chariot drawn by Rajasihas), for the Ministry of Royal Treasures;
4. Seal of Phra Plueng Song Ramad, for the Ministry of Educations;
5. Seal of Bua Kaew, for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
6. Seal of Phra Phirun Song Nag, for the Ministry of Agriculture;
7. Seal of Phra Ram Song Roth, for the Ministry of Public Works (later on, the Ministry of Communication);



A Buddha image of Chiangsaen style
at the cloister of the Uposatha Hall

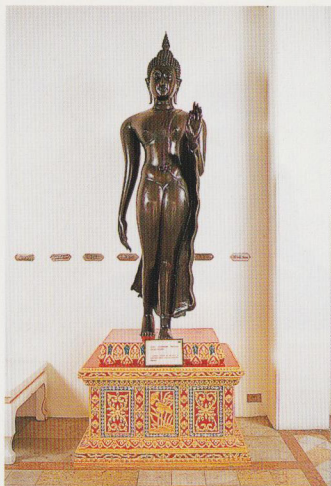


A Buddha image of Gandhara style
at the cloister of the Uposatha Hall

8. Seal of Chandramonthol (with a rabbit riding at the end of the chariot), for the Ministry of Justice;
9. Seal of Phra Ram, (it is supposed to be) for the Ministry of Royal Households; and,
10. Seal of Gajasih, for the Ministry of Defence.

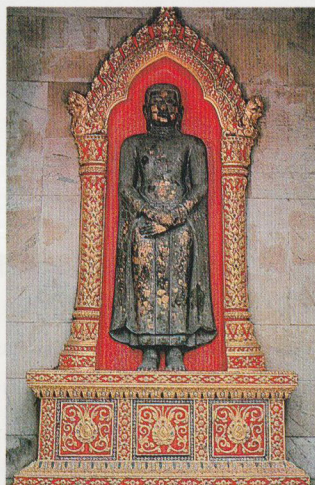
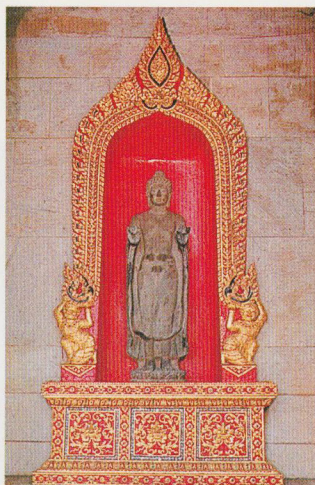
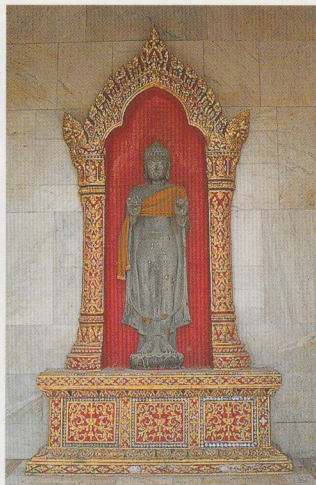
At the cloister of the Uposatha Hall, there enshrined fifty-two Buddha images acquired by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab from various places both in and outside the country. Most of them are ancient Buddha images of different attitudes and styles with exception of some of them cast from the original models in enlarged, reduced or equal sizes. Some of them worth to be mentioned are :-

1. The image of the Buddha seated cross-legged, in the attitude of subduing himself by fasting. This image which shows the (Greek) style of Gandhara sculptures, was cast after a stone original model kept in the museum at Lahore, present Pakistan.



Example of Buddha images enshrined at Phra Rabiang or the cloister of the Uposatha Hall with the walking Buddha on the top right corner as one of the finest of the Sukhothai school of arts.

2. The walking Buddha, in the style of the Sukhothai period, was taken from Wat Maha Dhatu in Bangkok. This image is one of the masterpieces of Thailand reckoned for its finest Sukhothai school of arts.



Standing Buddha images enshrined within the niches below the gables outside the cloister

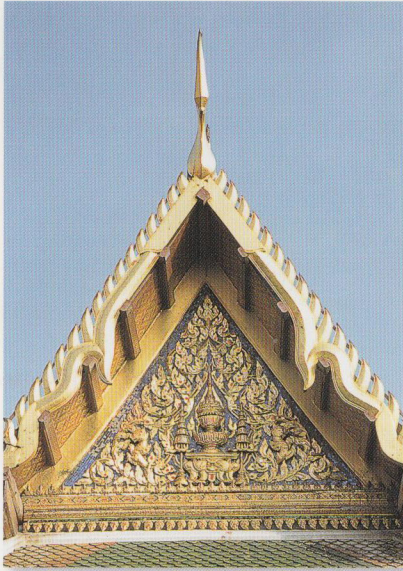
Besides, outside the wall of the cloister, there enshrined four standing stone Buddha images under the niches below the south and the north gables each in a niche. They are two of the Dvaravati period taken from Lopburi enshrined below the south gables; and one of the Amaravati period taken from Sri Lanka, another of the Ayudhya period taken from Lopburi, the later two of them enshrined below the north gables.



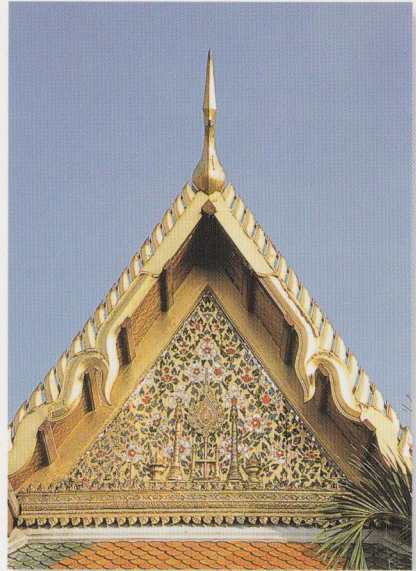
Song Phanuat Hall

In between Song Dharm Hall and Bovonvong Bell Tower are four small two-storeyed buildings linked together with verandahs. These halls had been built in the Grand Palace for the use of King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, when he entered the monkhood in 1873 at the age of twenty and already a monarch. The king, when he was building Wat Benchamabopitr, had this group of halls moved and re-assembled here in the same style, to be the residence of the abbot. The residence of the abbot is called "Phra Kuti" situating in the south wing while Phra Thinang Song Phanuat or the Song Phanuat Hall itself situating in the north wing closed to Si Somdej Pavilion, Centered at the group is a small pavilion used as a dining hall.

All the finials of the roofs of this group of cells are lacquered and gilded. The halls are now maintained in good condition. The Song Phanual Hall itself has some items of interest, viz :-



Gable-ends of
Song Phanuat Hall



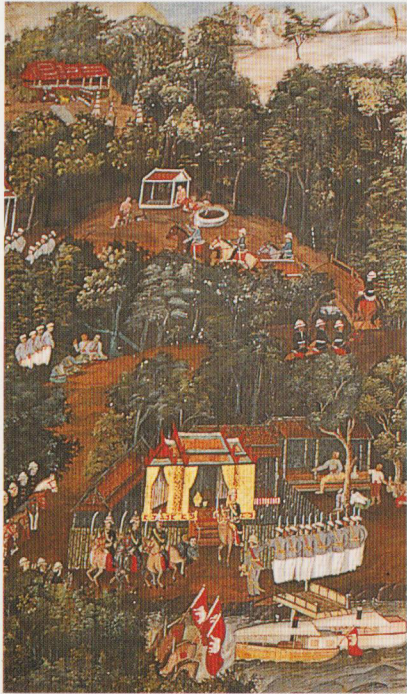
Gable-end of
Phra Kuti

1) Door and window panels. The designs, gilded and lacquered, show Decorations of the Highest Orders of Nopharat Rajavarabhorn, Maha Chakri, Chulachomklao, Chang Pheuk, and Monkut-thai respectively.

2) Murals. There are twenty important scenes in the life of King Rama V with explanatory notes. The paintings are beautiful done. A few have suffered from rain leakage, but most of them are still in good condition.

3) Objects housed. Inside Song Phanuat Hall, there housed some objects related to King Rama V, like his portrait as a monk, his monastic bed, his marble upper-half statue and an ivory sedan chair, etc.

Regarding "Phra Kuti" which is also the residence of the present abbot. It is of two gables with stucco motifs of Buddhsit monk fans, signifying that it was once the residence of the King's Upajjaya (the preceptor when he was ordained).



These paintings are believed to have been drawn by Prince Chandrasudeb due to the fact that he was employed to finish the construction of this building till its completion, and specially he was a well-known painter at that time.



A Portrait of King Chulalongkorn while he was a monk in 1873



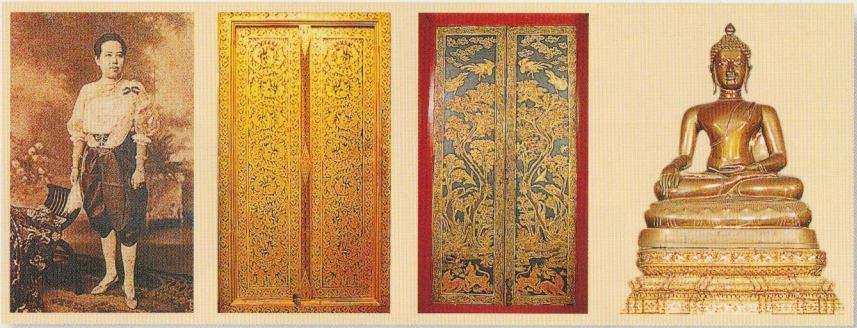
Phra Fang

Phra Vihara Somdej (S.P.)

Phra Vihara Somdej (S.P.) is a distinctively designed building of four gables with the part of the southern and the northern gables being of two storeys while the part of the eastern and the western gables having only a single storey. The southern gable is connected to the Kut Somdej building. The ground floor of this vihara was laid with marble slabs and the upper floor was made of wooden boards.

The distinct features of this vihara is focussed on its door and window panels of beautiful gilded and lacquered decoration and the stucco adornment of its niches and gables with glass inlaid surrounding the royal monogram "S.P." of Queen Saowabha Phongsri, the consort of King Chulalongkorn, who built this building in 1892, in accordance with the will of her husband king to serve as the Buddhist library known at that time as "Ho Buddhasasanasangraha" (later on it was amalgamated with Ho Phra Mondhiradharma and Ho Phra Samud Vajirañana into Ho Phra Samud Vajirañana for the Nation and becomes the National Library of Thailand as the present).

Nearby the front doorway, there are cast lions standing at each side.



Queen
Saowbha Phongsri

Inward door panels
of Phra Vihara Somdej

Phra Buddha
Norasih

Within the hall of both floors, there enshrined ancient Buddha images of different periods and attitudes and there also kept many kinds of the blue-and-white wares. At the ground floor, there housed many gilded-lacquered bookcases of which their panels depicting on the story of Ramakian (Ramayana) and Vessantara Jataka, etc.

Two important Buddha images enshrined in this vihara to be mentioned are :-

1) **Phra Fang**, wearing the attributes of royalty, seated with one leg above the other, in the attitude of subduing mara (demon), in the style of the Ayudhya period, enshrined in the niche under the northern gable. This Buddha image was founded at Vihara Luang, Wat Savanga, Muang Fang or Savangaburi, Uttaradit Province.

2) **The Replica of Phra Buddha Norasih**, Seated cross-legged in the attitude of subduing mara (demon), was cast from the original model which H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab had taken from Wat Phra Singh, Chiangmai Province, and then presented to King Chulalongkorn who had it enshrined as the main Buddha of the temporary Uposatha Hall. Now the original one has been enshrined at the Amphornsathan Throne Hall, Dusit Palace. The present one is enshrined as the central Buddha on the alter on the second floor of this vihara. It is a small image of only about 15 inches in width of its knee-span.



Phra Buddha Noraish in Phra Vihara Somdej (S.P.)



Buddhist monk fans of Wat Benchamabopitr



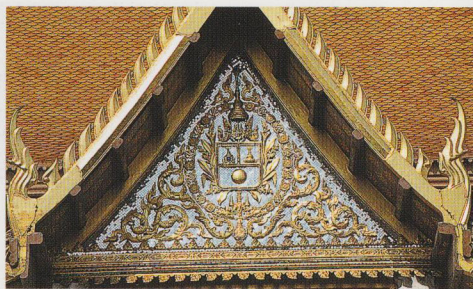
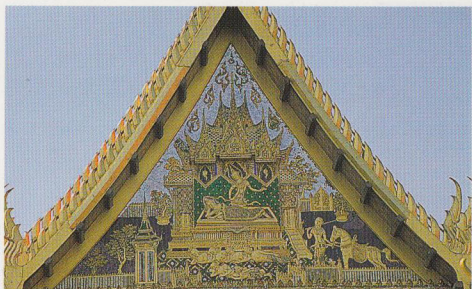
Queen Sawang Vaddhana who built Song Dharm Hall in dedication to the Crown Prince Mahavavirunnahis, her beloved son

Song Dharm Hall

Song Dharm Hall is a brickworked building of two storeys with a two-tiered roof of glazed tiles. This hall is also of four gables of which the serrated and the roof ridges were gilded. The ground floor including the staircases were covered with marble slaps while the upper floor was made of wooden boards.

All the four gable-ends are wood carvings, lacquered, gilded, and glass inlaid.

The north gable-end shows the scene from the life of the Buddha when he was Prince Siddhartha while gazing upon his sleeping wife and son before leaving his palace to renounce the world with attendant Channa and horse Kanthaka waiting nearby.



The south gable-end shows the scenes when the prince having arrived at the bank of Anomanadi, then having his hairs cut with a bayonet - like dagger, and lastly vowed to be a mendicant. Standing nearby were the attendant Channa and horse Kanthaka.

The east and the west (the front and the rear) gable-ends carry the emblem of the Crown Prince Mahavajirunnahis, the elder son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sawang Vaddhana, and the first Crown Prince of Thailand.

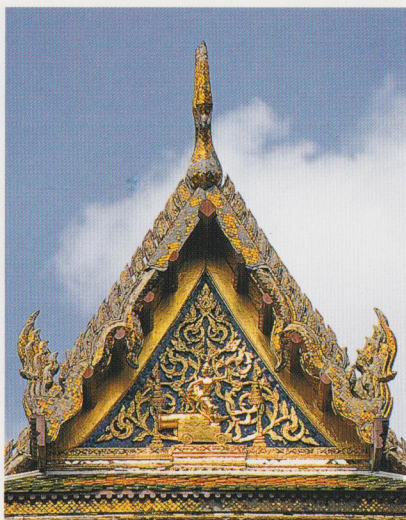
The Song Dharm Hall was built in 1902 by Queen Sawang Vaddhana in memory of the Crown Prince Mahavajirunnahis who had met with an untimely death, and with the purpose to be the suitable place for King Chulalongkorn to come to listen to the Dharma and to observe the eight precepts on Buddhist holy days. In recent times, however, it has been used for the lying - in - state of some members of the royal family or very high officials.



Bovornvong Bell Tower

The bell tower is a typical style of Thai architecture, roofed with glazed tiles and walled with marble slabs. It was set up in memory of Krom Phra Rajavang Bovorn Sathan Mongkol (the Vice-King) of the Front Palace which was the rank second to the king in importance. (This title was abolished in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, and had been replaced with the title of the Crown Prince). The bell itself was taken from Wat Bovorn Sathan Suddhavas in the precinct of the Front Palace. Thus the royal given name to this tower is "Bovornvong Bell Tower"

The east gable-end of the tower shows a design of Vishnu or Narayana standing on a cannon which was the emblem of the rank



of Krom Phra Rajavang Bovorn Sathan Mongkol, used in the reign of King Rama IV. The west gable - end shows a design of Lakshman on Hanuman which was the emblem used for the same title during the Ayudhya period.

The base of the north side of the tower has an inscription giving the story behind the building of this tower. Over the inscription stone is the picture of an ornamental pin, which is the emblem of King Pinklao who held the rank of Krom Phra Rajavang Bovorn Sathan Mongkol during the Fourth Reign.



Si Somdej Pavilion

The pavilion is brickworked building of four gables with open whole walls, floored with marble slabs. The roof is covered with glazed tiles of gilded serrated and roof ridges. Nearby the doorway stands a stone lion at each side.

The pavilion was built by King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, and his full brothers and sister, three sons and one daughter of King Mongkut, Rama IV, and Queen Debsirindra. The gable-ends show personal emblems of them each.

At present, the Si Somdej Pavilion contains three drums, two large and one long. The long one is 5.32 meters in length, made from the whole block of rosewood. It was founded at the headquarters of the Shan forces and brought down by General Chao Phraya



Surasakdimontri, the then commander in chief of Thai forces, after putting down the Shan rising in 1903. King Chulalongkorn had it kept at this temple.

It is to be mentioned here that in general temple practice, drums are beaten to call monks and novices to take lunch. It is also beaten to call up people in the area, especially the villagers to come urgently to the temple in case of emergency occurred to the temple or to the village. These are the short-large drums made of the whole block of wood with both ends wrapped with the skins of buffalos or oxen. In northern Thailand, the long drum is called "Klong Ud" or "Klong Luang", usually used as a musical instrument for the folkdance in various festivals.



Pavilions in front of the Uposatha Hall

There are two pavilions of identical shape and size in front of the Uposatha Hall. Both of them are brickworked buildings of four gables, roofed with glazed tiles and floored with marble slabs. The gable-ends are stucco motifs bearing the words of the Buddha in Pali, Khmer letters, as selected from the Suttanta Pitaka by Prince Sommot Amarabandhu. It is to be learned here that as Thailand is a Theravadin Buddhist, Pali language, the language of Theravadin Buddhism, is regarded as the sacred language and preference was given to inscribe in ancient Khmer letters in the olden days.

The south pavilion (the first one) is called simply “Sala Mom Cheuy” after Mom Cheuy, in whose memory it was built by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, her son, also a half brother to King Chulalongkorn. The stucco motifs and the inscriptions are as follow :-

The north gable-end portrays a fabulous lion symbolizing the Ministry of Interior of which H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab was the minister at that time.

The east gable-end bears a star of the Royal Order and Decoration in the set of the Knight Grand Cross of the Most Illustrious Order of Chulachomklao with the royal monogram “จจ” on central star circled by a reading line “We shall keep up our lineage.”

The western gable-end shows an angel riding on a horse signifying “Phra Phai” or the God of Wind.

The southern gable-end appears the Pali inscriptions in Khmer letters, read as:-

“A wife who acts as a mother, a sister,
a friend, and a handmaid, endowed
with fascinating love, is excellent, and on
the dissolution of her body will
certainly attain heaven.”

(Suttanipata Anguttaranikaya, 23/60/95)

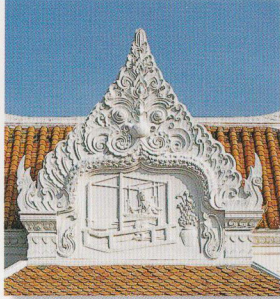
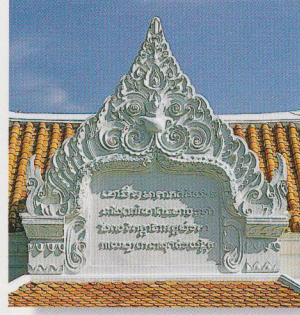
The north pavilion (the second one) is called simply “Sala Yai-Rabiab” after the mother Yai and the daughter Rabiab who contributed to have constructed this pavilion.

The west gable-end portrays the figure of Nang Prachan weaving of Yai Bua (lily thread) implying Yai (thread) of the mother’s name.

The east gable-end appears a woven garlands, implying “Rabiab” (order) as the garlands being woven orderly, identifying the daughter’s name “Rabiab”.

The south and the north gable-ends inscribe the words of the Buddha on the worldly and the sublime treasures as following :-

“In this world whoso is endowed with
wealth, paddy, son and daughter, wife, he is
lucky, reputed and honoured by his relatives,
friends, and even the king.



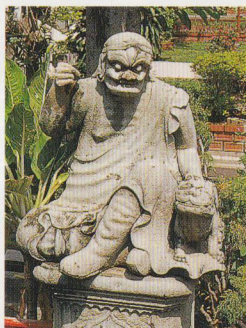
In this world, in whom there are faith, virtue, learning, charity and wisdom, he is the righteous man, the wise man, and be accomplished with both prosperities in this life."

(Suttanipata Anguttaranikaya, 24/74/147)

"In whom, either man or woman, there are seven treasures of faith, virtue, moral shame, moral dread, learning, charity and knowledge, he is the most wealthy person in the world, and no one can overcome him in this world and even in the heavenly world.

Thus the wise one when recollecting the words of the Buddha be established in faith, virtue, confidence, and clearly perceiving the Dharma."

(Suttanipata Anguttaranikaya, 2/7/7)



The Canal

The canal was dug in 1900 at the beginning of the construction of the temple in order to demarcate the zones of Buddha quarter and monk living quarter, and at the same time to fill up the lowland as well. It served also at that time as the water resource for consumption. Retaining walls were constructed at the both banks. Along the lines of them creates a beautiful order of their fences cast in flower adornment composed to the stone posts with lotus bud tops. There also planted trees in row in parallel with the banks of both sides. At the approach of the bridges crossing the canal, there stand twelve Chinese stone dolls (agalmatolited).

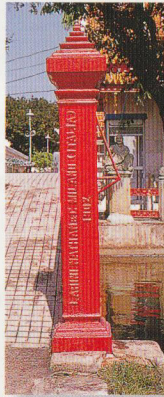
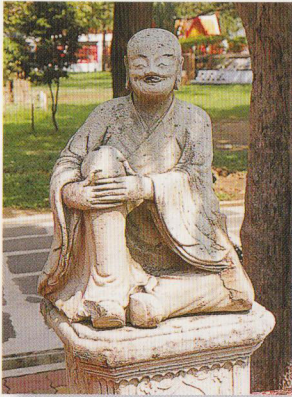


Three-Gabled Waterside Pavilions

On the banks of the canal, there are two waterside pavilions of three gables, roofed with glazed tiles, floored with concrete, having two staircases in opposite side stretching into the water. These pavilions had been constructed and were presented to the temple together with the bridges and the Bovornvong Bell Tower on 6 December 1902.

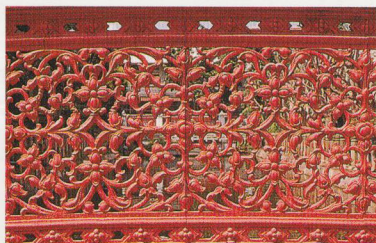
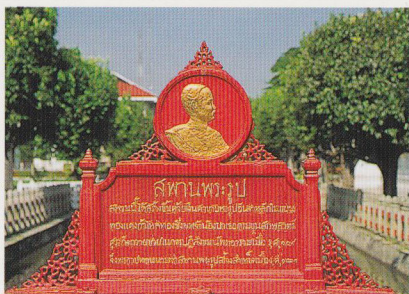
The first pavilion is called “Saphannam Chao Khun Chom Marda Samlee”, situating on the northern bank of the canal, east of the Uposatha Hall. It was built by the contribution of Queen Sukhumal Marasri, a consort of King Chulalongkorn, in memory of Chao Khun Chom Marnda Samlee, her beloved mother.

The second pavilion is called “Saphannam Thao Vorachandra”, situating on the northern bank of the canal, western of the Uposatha Hall. It was built by the contribution of Thao Vorachandra (Chao Chom Marnda Vad, a consort of King Mongkut, Rama IV), Prince Bidyalabh Bridhidhada and Prince Daninivat.



Bridges Crossing the Canal

There are three bending bridges crossing the canal. They are all metal cast surfaced with steel concrete. Their railings in both sides had been designed in Thai traditional adornment atop with name-plates bearing bas-reliefs and inscriptions. The Department of Public Works had been assigned to construct these bridges. The structure and its railings were cast in Italy. The cast posts at their staircases inscribed the name of the foundry company in Milan, Italy.



Saphan Phra Roop (The Royal Relief Bridge), situated in the eastern. It was built by the fund raised from the distribution of King Rama V's gilded copper bas-reliefs undertaken by Prince Sarbasastra Subhakij in 1900.

Saphan Thuay (The Cup Bridge), situated in the middle part of the canal. It was built by the fund raised from the distribution of the enameled tea-cups given by the king at the annual festival of the temple in 1900.

Saphan Nga (The Ivory Bridge), situated in the western part of the canal. It was built by the fund raised from the distribution of the ivories presented to the king by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab at the annual festival of the temple in 1900.



Six rowed Kuti of the monk living quarters

All the three bridges had been completed and were dedicated to the temple together with the three-Gabled Waterside Pavilions and the Bovornvong Bell Tower on 6 December 1902.

Buildings in the Living Quarters

From the very beginning, acceleration had been made to construct many buildings to accommodate 33 monks and novices (the number equal to that of the years of his reigning) invited from Wat Mahadhatu, Bangkok, as the first group on 6 December 1900. They are Song Phanuat Hall for the abbot, six rowed kuti (celles), two single kuti (cells) for the monks and novices (number 1-32), and Sala Si Somdej (Si Somdej Pavilion) respectively.

Following years, there ordered to have constructed each Kuti a year increasiag to the year of his reigning till to the last one called "Kuti Krom Phraklang Khangthi" (Royal Treasury Building) or the Kuti No. 41 which the king had presented to the temple before his passing away on 23 October 1910.



Besides, during his time, other buildings had been constructed, viz; Sala Bannarasabhag as dining hall, Sala Benchabisabhag as a storehouse, Kuti Somdej (Somdej Hall) as a lodge for Somdej Phra Vanarat (Dit Udayo) the lord abbot of Wat Mahadhatu who had been invited to look after the general works at the beginning, and also as a lodge for the new monks and guests. Apart from these, there was a large kuti constructed by the contribution of Prince Sarbasastra Subhakij, simply called "Kuti Sarbasastra."

Actually, the last kuti which King Chulalongkorn had ordered to build is "Kuti Borom Rajudis" (No. 42) but unfortunately it had not been finished when the king died.



King Vajiravudh, Rama VI, his son, who was successive to the throne, had ordered to continue the construction till its completion. At the same time, King Vajiravudh had also contributed to the construction of three kuti bearing the same name as “Kuti Dilok Nopharath”, No. 43 and No. 44 which each is a small single kuti among the rowed kuti, and No. 45 which is a large single kuti. Thus comes to an end of the first phase of its construction.

Benchamabopitr School

The school is a European styled building of two storeys with eight gables made of brickwork. King Chulalongkorn had it built with “the funds belonging to Prince Isariyabhorn, Prince Anusorn Siriprasadhana and (their mother) Chao Chom Marnda Kesorn in R.E. 121 (A.D. 1903)”, situating in the western part of the monk living quarters closed to the western fence of the temple.

At present this building is called “Phra Buddha Chao Luang Building” (King Chulalongkorn Building). It is registered as a conservative building by the Fine Arts Department conforming to the Law of Conservation of Ancient Buildings of Thailand.

King Chulalongkorn had his strong intention to provide education to the public at large throughout the country, thus setting up this school “to instruct lay students” at first. At the beginning, the



temporary school was just a simple building made of wood, thatched with nipa leaves, and walled with bamboo boards. It started its open on 5 May 1901. When the construction was completed, the king gave the name as inscribed on the name board attached to the front gable as "Benchamabopitr School built in Ratanakosindra Era 121" (A.D. 1903). To this building, it had been declared open since 12 April 1904.

Bodhi Tree

The Bodhi tree (*figus religiosa*) or the so-called Phra Sri Mahadhi or Ton Pho, is significant to Buddhists as the Buddha attained the enlightenment under this tree more than 2500 years ago.

The Bodhi tree growing on the lawnyard in the back of the Uposatha Hall was taken from India more than a hundred years ago. In 1891 H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab had gone to India, having visited many Buddhist sites, he arrived at Bodh Gaya, the place of the enlightenment of the Buddha. There the Governor of Gaya presented him with three offshoots of the Bodhi tree. Upon his return to Thailand, he presented them to King Chulalongkorn. The king had ordered to grow one at Wat Assadanganimit and the other two had been nurtured in his palace at Sichang Isle, Sriraja, Chonburi province.



Later on in 1900 while the construction of Wat Benchamabopitr was going on, he went to Sichang Isle and saw these offshoots growing very well. Then he had taken them to rest at Suan Dusit Garden for some time. Then on 2 August 1900, King Chulalongkorn went to Wat Benchamabopitr and planted one of them here himself. It has been grown up abundantly up to the present day.

Uruphong Pavilion

Uruphong Pavilion is a small building constructed in typical Thai style with four gables. It was made of brickwork, roofed with glazed tiles and floored with concrete, situating in the lawnyard back of the Uposatha Hall nearby the Bodhi tree. It was of unknown date of its first construction until in 1933 when Chao Chom Marnda Luen, a consort of King Chulalongkorn had it renewed to the whole concreted structure. In the hall there interred the ashes of Prince Uruphong and his mother - Chao Chom Marnda Luen beneath the pediment of the Buddha image cubicled with the three walls below the north gable. (Prince Uruphong Rajjasombhoj was a son of King Chulalongkorn born from Chao Chom Marnda Luen.)



The Boundary Fences

The boundary fences of the temple was designed by H.R.H. Prince Narisranuvattivongse, a half brother to King Chulalongkorn, from the very beginning. After the grillage, the fences were constructed and their posts were erected with brickworks. The metal railings were cast at the foundry of the Department of Royal Navy by a Chinese blooded named Afok in free of charge for labour costs. After the casting, the railings of 187 pieces in number were composed to the bases and the posts for three sides with exception to the south which was the whole brickwork. The fences were completely constructed about 1904.

There are total ten gates throughout the fences, three each in the east and the north, two each in the west and the south. All of them are of typical overarches with a looping eyebrow shape.

The characteristic feature is paid to the eastern gate fronting the Uposatha Hall. It is a large gate with a four-tiered roof, covering the other small gates at each side. Over the gate there attached the name board of "Wat Benchamabopitr Dusitvanaram", and above the name board is "Dharmacakra" or "Wheel of Law" symbolizing the spread of Buddhism. At the left corner of the name board is the Thai figure ๕ (5) in decorative circle, the logo of the temple, signifying the "Fifth King". At the right corner of the name board is the logo of



Suan Dusit Garden figurative as a Bodhisattva sitting on a lotus with the left hand holding a lotus bud and the right hand touching his laps, letting his right foot down to the ground. The halo shines circling his head.

P. Kittivan Library

The library is a modern Thai building made of brickwork with two storeys, situating on the lawnyard in the back of the Uposatha Hall closed to the west fence. It was built by the Supreme Patriarch (Plod Kittisobhano) when he held the rank of Somdej Phra Vanarat with the fund allocated partly by the government and partly by the money raised from the annual festivals of the temple. It was completed in 1956 and the name given is "P. Kittivan Library" after his personal and religious names.

On the front of upper floor, there enshrined an image of the Buddha made of sandal wood within the niche. It is a standing Buddha wearing the attributes of royalty, in the attitude of pacifying disease, in the style of the Ayudhya period.



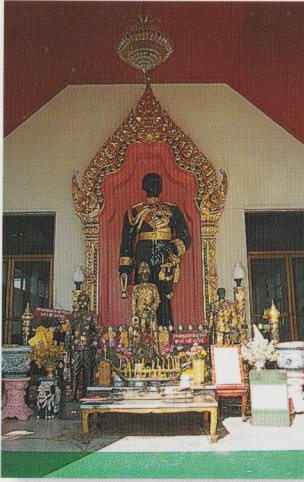
At present, there are no books housed in this building as they were shifted to house in the left wing of the ground floor of Dhammajarajapanchabopit Hall many years ago. This building is now a residence of monks and novices and also for the guests.

The ground floor is used for religious ceremonies and functions.

A.P.K. Memorial Museum

This museum is a modern Thai building of two storeys made of brickwork, situating on the lawnyard in the back of the Uposatha Hall in parallel with the canal closed to the western fence. It was built by the Supreme Patriarch (Plod Kittisobhano) the then lord abbot in 1957 with the purpose to serve as lodging for foreign high-ranked priests. Thus it was called firstly as "Agantukashrom" (Guest House). Since the Supreme Patriarch passed away in 1962, the building has been reorganized to be "A.P.K. Memorial Museum" (A.=Ariyavongsagatañan, a royal given name of the Supreme Patriarch; P.=Plod, his personal name; K.=kittisobhano, his Buddhist given name). The museum is housed his personal belongings and his ashes.

Then in 1989 the temple together with his disciples had joined in the making of his bronze statues, one equal size sitting, another standing enlarged one and a half size. His Majesty the King had graciously presided over the casting ceremony on 20 October



1989. The standing statue has been enshrined within the niche outside the eastern wall of the museum.

The Centennial Reigning Memorial Hall of King Rama V

The hall is a modern Thai building of one storey situating in the back of the Uposatha Hall in parallel with the western fence. It is a brickworked building roofed with glazed tiles, built on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the reigning of King Chulalongkorn on 1 October 1968. The marble plate inscribed the horoscope of the building had been graciously blessed by making marks with sachet powder by H.M. the King on 6 April 1969, and then it was constructed until it finished. The hall serves multi-purposes as a place of meeting, feasting monks and novices and other religious functions.

Following years, Wat Benchamabopit had undertaken to cast the standing statue of King Chulalongkorn, three metres in height, in the attributes of royalty, to be enshrined within the niche in front of



the eastern entrance. His Majesty the King had graciously presided over the opening ceremony of the statue on 22 October 1973. It is to be mentioned here that as King Chulalongkorn had passed away on 23 October 1910, since this day has been officially declared to be a national holiday upto the present. It is called "Piyamaharaj Day."

Sala Dharmajinarajapanchabopitr

This sala or the hall is a modern Thai building made of brickwork of four storeys with the flat top of the roof as the fifth floor. It situates in parallel with the south fence. It had been built on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary Birthday of the Crown Prince Mahavajiralongkorn on 28 July 1975. His Majesty the King had graciously presided over the opening ceremony on 30 march 1981.

Sala Dhamajinarajapanchabopitr is multi-purposed hall. It serves as meeting rooms, Pali School, Buddhist Sunday School, Office of the Dharmacarika Mission, Benchamabopitr Association, Wat Benchamabopitr Library, Buddhist meditation and Dharma training centers as well as other religious affairs.

Lord Abbots of Wat Benchamabopitr

Somdej Phra Vanarat (Chai Punnadatto)



Born in 1857 in Ayudhya Province, he entered novicehood in 1873 and ordained as monk in 1877. King Chulalongkorn invited him from Wat Mahadhatu to be the first abbot of Wat Bachamabopitr on 6 December 1900. He died on 11 October 1928. His important posts were:- the Governor of Northern Circle Order, the Governor of Ratchaburi Circle Order, the Governor General of Southern Order, and the Governor General of Northern Order.

Somdej Phra Sangharaja, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand (Plod Kittisobhano)



Born on 27 May 1889 in Bangkok, he entered novicehood in 1900 and was the first novice to have passed the highest Pali Grade 9 in Thailand. He ordained as monk in 1909, succeeded to the abbot on 11 October 1928 and died on 17 June 1962. His important posts were:- the Governor of Northern Circle Order, Ecclesiastical Minister of Education, Ecclesiastical Prime Minister, and the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, who was the first to have visited the United States of America. Furthermore, he was the President of Tripitaka Translation Committee to have rendered Thai translation of the Sacred Buddhist Scriptures (Tripitaka) completely for the whole set, first time in Thailand to celebrate the 2500th Anniversary Buddhist Era in B.E. 2500 (A.D. 1957) Thus contributes much to the Thai Buddhist and Buddhism as a whole.

Somdej Phra Buddhajinavongse (Suvan Suvannajoto)



Born on 5 June 1920 in Chiangrai Province, he entered novicehood in 1934 and ordained as monk in 1940. He died on 22 September 1994. His important posts were:- the Governor of Region 6 Order, President of Dharmacarika Missions, Member of the Council of Elders, Director General of Pali Studies, At the same time, he played the great roles in Buddhist mission abroad.

Phra Brahmacariyacarya (Samud Rajatavanno)



Born on 5 June 1920 in Angthong Province, he entered novicehood in 1934 and ordained as monk in 1940. He has succeeded to the Abbot of Wat Benchamabopitr since 1995 upto the present. He has occupied the important posts as follow:- the Governor of Region 5 Order, the Governor of Region 11 Order, Chief of Dharmaduta Mission Line 3, Secretary to the Director General of Pali Studies respectively. At present, he is a Member of the Council of Elders and the Governor General of Southern Order.



Conclusion

Since the time of its foundation in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, Wat Benchamabopit has been under patronage of all successive kings and queens, the royal families, the nobles and general people. All the abbots and their executive members have maintained the temple to its original layout plan, symmetry and proportions with amenity, serenity and peaceful atmosphere though additional buildings have been constructed. It becomes national heritage showing the finest architectural craftsmanship and thus it attracts the interest of many tourists to come to visit with a large number in each year.

Wat Benchamabopit is not meaningful only to Thai architectural exhibition, but it plays a great role and pays more contributions to the prosperities of the Sangha in Thailand as briefed below.

Administration

The abbots and senior monks of this temple have been appointed to the higher posts of the Sangha administration from the topmost as the Supreme Patriarch (Sangharaja) down to the posts of the Ecclesiastic Prime Minister (Sanghanayaka), Ecclesiastic Minister (Sanghamontri), the Governor General of the Southern and the Northern Orders, the Governor of the Circles and of the Regions, the Governor of the Provinces and the Director of the Districts, etc.

Education

Apart from the regular provision of education within the temple, resulting a great number of graduated in Dharma and Pali studies, an encouragement and financial supports are given to many monks and novices to carry on their study both in and outside the country. Many monks have graduated with the B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees and later on have played the great roles in administration and education for the Sangha including the spread of Buddhism abroad. Besides, there are many projects carried on by the temple, such as the Buddhist Sunday School for young people, formal and non-formal education for far-going people in northern Thailand. Supports have been made also to primary and secondary schools of the government situating within the precincts of the temple. Funds are also provided to needy students occasionally.

Spreading Buddhism

There are regular Dharma preachings in the Uposatha Hall on Sundays and Buddhist holy days. Meditation centre has been organized. The temple is the first to have initiated the summer ordination for school students and young people. The Dhamacarika Mission has been set up to spread Buddhism to the mountain people in northern Thailand. Buddhist missions have been sent to western countries. There are many temples set up by the monks from Wat Benchamabopitr in Europe and U.S.A.

Public Works

Wat Benchamabopitr is a royal monastery of great value to the national heritage. To maintain in a good condition is a heavy burden to all the abbots and the executive committee. Fortunately, with the supports of H.M. the King, the Government and other contributors, the temple can carry on its maintenance, preservation, and construction of other necessary buildings continuously with respect to the will and purposes of its founder, King Chulalongkorn.

It is a matter of pride that the Government and the Order of Sangha had joined to have held the Ceremony for the Consecration of Holy Water at the Uposatha Hall of Wat Benchamabopitr on 3 December 1999 to be presented to H.M. the King for bathing on the Royal Celebration of the 72th Anniversary Birthday of H.M. the King on 5 December 1999. The waters had been taken from the 140 sacred sources throughout the country and poured together into a royal bowl to be consecrated in the ceremony. This is a royal tradition practised down from the olden days.

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